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FM AMEMBASSY ALMATY  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4102  
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 2016  
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM PRIORITY 0042  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 0913  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 1503

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ALMATY 000598

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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN (J. MUDGE), PRM/ECA (R. OLSON), DRL/IRF  
(N. HEWETT), DRL/PHD (C. KUCHTA-HELBLING)

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [PTER](#) [KZ](#) [UZ](#)

SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: GOK DENIES REFOULEMENT OF UZBEK  
REFUGEES; NAZAROV TO SWEDEN

REF: A. ALMATY 77

[B](#). 05 ALMATY 4480

[C](#). 05 ALMATY 4393

Classified By: DCM Mark Asquino, reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

[1](#). (C) Summary: Three months after a group of Uzbek citizens was forcibly returned to Uzbekistan from southern Kazakhstan, the Kazakhstani MFA formally responded to UNHCR's multiple inquiries with a flat denial of any GOK involvement. This contradicts previous, informal high-level GOK acknowledgement to post of the involvement of Kazakstani security forces in the detentions. The GOK's formal denial has put UNHCR in an awkward situation and derailed plans for a public statement on the case. The UNHCR protection officer in Almaty reports significantly improved cooperation with the GOK on refugee issues as a result of the situation, however. He also reports that Imam Nazarov, the spiritual leader of all the men returned to Uzbekistan in November, has been accepted for resettlement by Sweden. End summary.

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November Refoulement of Uzbeks  
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[2](#). (C) In a February 10 meeting with POEC chief, UNHCR protection officer Narasimha Rao provided a translation of a January 26 note verbale from the MFA to UNHCR denying any GOK involvement in the November return of nine Uzbek citizens formerly residing in Shymkent (reftels). The note stated that the Office of the Procurator General, the Ministry of Interior, the Committee on National Security (KNB), and the Agency on Fighting Economic Crimes had all informed the MFA that they had not detained the individuals in question. The note also said that the GOK had never considered the issue of extraditing them to Uzbekistan. According to the note, the Uzbek Department of Interior of the Tashkent region had reported that Uzbek law enforcement authorities detained the nine individuals listed Ref B from November 28 to December 2 in Uzbekistan.

[3](#). (C) Rao expressed frustration with the GOK's response, as it contradicted previous acknowledgements to the USG by FM Tokayev and Security Council chair Utemuratov (Refs A and B) that Kazakhstani security forces had been involved in the unauthorized operation. The GOK's denial of involvement had complicated UNHCR's plans to issue a public statement on the case. There were no witnesses to the November 24 and 27 arrests in Shymkent who were willing to come forward and contest the GOK's version of events.

14. (C) On the positive side, Rao noted, the GOK had become much more open to dialogue with the UNHCR on refugee issues since the November incident. Whereas UNHCR used to have a hard time getting meetings with ministries, and encountered Migration Police unwilling to recognize the rights of asylum seekers, the situation has improved. Rao credited a set of instructions circulated to law enforcement agencies by the MFA with improving understanding of refugee rights and willingness to grant registration to individuals without travel documents. Law enforcement authorities are now obliged to contact the MFA regarding any cases involving asylum seekers. He added that the MFA, on its own initiative, had invited all 11 law enforcement agencies to a February 22 meeting in Astana with UNHCR officials. The goal of the meeting is to discuss and develop proper procedures for dealing with refugees.

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Imam Nazarov Accepted by Sweden  
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15. (C) Rao informed POEC chief that Sweden had agreed to accept Imam Nazarov and his family. Although the case is being handled on an expedited basis due to Nazarov's fears that the Uzbek authorities will try to detain him in Kazakhstan, the absence of a Swedish Embassy in Kazakhstan has slowed the process. The Swedish Embassy in Islamabad is preparing the travel documents, which will be sent to UNHCR in Almaty. According to Rao, Nazarov is extremely concerned about his safety in Almaty and believes that he is being followed; it is not clear whether the concerns are justified. Rao plans to work with the MFA to ensure that Nazarov's departure is not hindered by any CIS "black list" information the GOU may have distributed.

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